

controversial amendments they were forced to vote on. Mike Synar, who was rather candid in his comments, said: If you don't want to fight fires, don't be a firefighter. If you don't want to vote on controversial amendments, don't run for the House of Representatives. That is what we are here for.

I tend to take the same point of view, maybe because after a few years a Senator votes on everything at least once.

But we have to get back to where we aren't just lurching, as we are now, from one quorum call to another, an empty Senate Chamber, waiting for something to happen. There is a lot out there for us to talk about, and we should. I think the American people would feel a little better about us if we sat down and at least honestly debated an issue and voted with some frequency.

What we are trying to do now is to stop what I consider to be the gross abuse of the filibuster. What we have been through here has destroyed the functionality of the Senate. To think any person can come to the floor and basically bring this place to a halt not just for an hour or a day but maybe 1 week, that goes way beyond what I believe was the intent of creating this body. We wanted to be here in those historic moments of titanic debates over issues that changed the course of history and to reflect and respect the rights of the minority. But now it has become one sad example of obstructionism after another.

I think the Senator from New Mexico is moving in the right direction. I am not sure we will achieve exactly what he wants, but I can say we wouldn't have this conversation unless the Senator from New Mexico and Senator MERKLEY had shown such initiative for years—they have been at this for years, if I am not mistaken—and I do believe it is going to end up in changes to Senate procedure, which I support, that will try to make people stay on the floor.

I have one example. The Senator from New Mexico may remember when a Senator from Kentucky, now retired, Senator Jim Bunning, objected to the extension of unemployment benefits. We wanted to extend them for literally millions of Americans, and he stood up at his desk on the Republican side and said, "I object," and then sat down. That was the end of the story. That was really the end of the debate.

So I went to the floor, and I said: I just want to give notice to the Senator from Kentucky I am going to renew that request every half hour, so you better return to the floor—because he has to object every time. This was late at night.

We mobilized a number of people in the cloakroom, and we came to the floor and we kept it going. Finally, he got up and complained he was missing the University of Kentucky basketball game on television because of this. I thought: Several million people are missing unemployment benefits because of this too.

So that is in the nature of what the Senator is trying to achieve. If there is something important enough to stop the course of the Senate activity, to stop the business of the Senate, then you should be prepared to be on the Senate floor and argue your case and bring your allies with you. If they will join you, then perhaps you will have a debate that is worthy of this body.

Unfortunately, we now have Members who make their objection and leave for dinner or for the weekend or to attend a wedding, which happened once, and you do not see them again, and the Senate waits and waits and waits. That does have to come to an end.

I thank the Senator for his leadership on this important issue. I do not know that we will take it up tomorrow, but I think we will take it up very soon, and we should.

I thank both Senators.

REMEMBERING DANIEL K. INOUE

Mr. CONRAD: Mr. President, I want to take a moment to honor the life and career of my colleague and friend, Senator Daniel Inouye, who passed away on Monday, December 17 at the age of 88.

To say that Mr. Inouye lived a full life would be an understatement. A veteran of World War II, Mr. Inouye served his country valiantly in Italy before sustaining an injury that would claim his right arm. The bravery shown by Mr. Inouye during his service to our country later earned him the Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart, a Distinguished Service Cross and ultimately, the Medal of Honor, the highest military award.

Mr. Inouye began his political career after graduating from the University of Hawaii. He then obtained a law degree from one of my alma maters, the George Washington University. After first being elected to serve in the Hawaii territorial House of Representatives and later the territorial Senate, Mr. Inouye became the first person from Hawaii elected to the United States House of Representatives after Hawaii became a state in 1959. After serving 3 years in the House, Mr. Inouye was elected to the Senate where he would go on to be elected to serve the people of Hawaii 9 times. In June of 2010, Mr. Inouye was elected to succeed Senator Robert Byrd as President pro tempore of the Senate.

Throughout his political career, Senator Inouye was first and foremost a servant of the people of Hawaii. He has served them in Congress ever since Hawaii was admitted to the Union. After over five decades of service, it is no wonder that Dan's mark can be seen all across the islands. I was proud to serve with Senator Inouye on the Indian Affairs Committee, where he was a voice for the Native Hawaiian population. Throughout his career, he worked tirelessly to ensure that Native Hawaiians had access to education, healthcare, and jobs. One of his achievements was

the Native American Languages Act, which has helped Native people preserve and practice their tribal languages. In particular, during my first term in the Senate, Senator Inouye worked with me in the committee to pass legislation providing compensation for two Indian tribes in my State that were impacted by the construction of the dams along the Missouri River. That effort provided a critical source of funding for the tribes to restore their economic base.

Senator Inouye also fought hard to defend Hawaii's natural beauty. Because of his efforts, thousands of additional acres have been added to national parks, wildlife refuges, and nature preserves. It would be hard to imagine what Hawaii would be like today without Senator Inouye's leadership and effective representation. His love for the people of Hawaii was on his mind and in his heart even at the end, when the last word he spoke was "Aloha."

In his role as chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Inouye fought for aid for my home State of North Dakota after devastating, record breaking flood waters decimated the community of Minot in 2011. Mr. Inouye used his power to ensure that the residents of Minot received critical aid to help them rebuild their lives.

Mr. Inouye is survived by his wife, Irene Hirano; his son, Ken; and granddaughter, Maggie. His service to his country is second to none, the loss of Mr. Inouye will be greatly missed in his home State of Hawaii and here in the Senate.

RESOLVING SPENDING ISSUES

Mr. KERRY: Mr. President, earlier this week I supported this agreement to avoid unacceptable tax increases on the middle-class, and to at last begin to undo the damage to our fiscal standing that began 11 years ago when President Bush signed into law unaffordable tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. Make no mistake; that unfair and unaffordable tax policy has been the biggest driver of the fiscal mess and the complete ideological rigidity of congressional Republicans on the issue of tax policy has been the biggest obstacle to cleaning up that mess. That House Republicans remained intransigent even after the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve just shows in very stark terms the dimensions of that problem.

In contrast, the Senate acted in an overwhelmingly bipartisan way to make the best out of a bad situation. This, at least, sends a good message to the country that there's hope that Washington can function.

But the fact that even against the ultimate drop-dead, high stakes deadline, so little common ground could be found itself underscores the dangerous situation we have found ourselves in these last years. This may have been the best that could have been accomplished at